WORKERS VANGUARD

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ITALY

Weld the Palestine Movement and Working-Class Struggles

The following is a translation of a leaflet issued by our comrades of the Lega trotskista d'Italia.

SEPTEMBER 26—The general strike for Gaza waged by the Unione Sindacale di Base (USB) union federation exceeded everyone's expectations. Hundreds of thousands of students and workers (including many members of the CGIL trade union federation and other unions) were brought into the streets. United by a felt need to stop the blah-blah of the "international community," they took direct action by blocking ports, train stations and highways to put an end to Israeli genocide and force the Meloni government to break with Israel.

They were spurred to action by the CALP dockworkers in Genoa, who called for a strike to defend the Sumud Flotilla and make sure that nothing, ***not even a single nail***, left Italy for Israel. A million workers downed tools. While the strike did not bring the country to a standstill (especially in industry), ***it shook the government***—despite the traitorous CISL and UIL union leaders' efforts to prevent the strike and CGIL leader Maurizio Landini's call for separate strikes to keep CGIL and USB activists from joining forces.

The scale of the mobilization frightened Meloni and Salvini, who first flooded ports and train stations with police to open them and then launched a hysterical campaign against "violence" to isolate the strikers. Now they hope to prevent strikes with diversionary tactics: gibberish about recognizing a Palestinian "state" (if Hamas releases the hostages and agrees to its own destruction) and the dispatch of military ships to accompany the flotilla for "rescue purposes" (and surely prevent it from entering Gaza's port!)

Both the USB and the CGIL have said they are prepared to immediately call a general strike if the flotilla is attacked. The USB is calling for "workers to raise the issue of an embargo on all goods bound for and coming from Israel." ***Good! What needs to be done now is clear: put the dockworkers' call into action!***

- ***For a united strike if the flotilla is attacked***—not separate or symbolic strikes that divide forces, but a massive show of strength that delivers a blow against the interests of Italian businesses and puts the government on the ropes.
- Port, railway, airport and weapons industry workers must impose a ***labor boycott of Israel*** to stop arms and strategic goods. This would do more for the Palestinian people than a hundred motions by Democratic Party (PD) leader Schlein and European Commission President von der Leyen.
- ***Defend the right to defend Palestine*** by taking a stand with all pro-Palestinian activists facing repression, opposing laws that target and penalize those who strike or block infrastructure and demanding the immediate release of all arrested activists, from students in Milan to Anan Yaeesh, a Palestinian liberation fighter jailed in Italy.

Many workers are horrified by the Israeli genocide but remain passive because the link between their daily suffering and the Palestinian struggle has not been made clear. The most important thing is to get them involved in this struggle. Workers will not take action on the basis of moral exhortations or accusations of being "complicit in genocide." The only way to get workers to make the struggle for the liberation of Palestine their own is to show that supporting it is essential to defending their own interests against the common enemy.

Italy's foreign policy serves the interests of the big corporations, and they live under the American Empire's protective umbrella. Italian politicians (those in power as well as those in opposition) agree on one thing: when America gives an order, you can complain about it, but you must obey.

The U.S. is turning the screws on the world, forcing its allies to rearm and prepare for new wars, the price of

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which will be paid by workers. To obtain decent healthcare, education and pensions, we must oppose the EU and NATO, which are bleeding the country dry. Cancel the debt to Italian and foreign banks and financial institutions. To combat the high cost of living, we must oppose sending weapons to Ukraine. To fight layoffs and cuts in social services that were imposed in order to pay the foreign debt and finance military spending, we must beat back the reactionary assault by Trump and his allies. To win a good contract for metal workers and resolve the crisis in industry, we must overturn the economic dynamics that created it—from restructuring disguised as a green deal to tariffs to the U.S. government's plans for reshoring. To truly defend ourselves, we must oppose imperialism: ***Down with the European Union! Down with NATO! Close the bases! Not one penny or man for the Italian army!***

Many Marxist groups rightly point out that "the only way to really stop the genocide is to hurt the economic interests of Israel and its allies, starting with the Meloni government" (PCR, Revolutionary Communist Party). Others call for "escalating the pressure to get rank and file workers in the big unions (like the CGIL) involved in the struggle and make the CGIL leaders stop yammering and put the material power of the organization behind a major strike for Palestine" (FIR, Revolutionary Internationalist Faction–Left Voice). Of course, the movement must be broadened and union leaders must be pushed into the struggle. But it must be made clear to everyone that the strategy of the current union leaders is to avoid a decisive confrontation with the ruling class. Even if they were to lead mass strikes, they would try at every turn to rein them in, condemning them to defeat. Groups such as the PCR or the FIR (and they are certainly not the only ones) condemn the "limitations" of the leaderships but not their basic strategy.

What is the union leaders' strategy for Palestine? To organize strikes and protests to touch the imperialist leaders' hearts and make them "become human again"—thus leaving the solution to Palestinian oppression in their hands. The CGIL calls for "governments and international institutions to take immediate action to stop what is happening, up to and including the convening of a peace conference under the auspices of the UN." The USB criticizes "the inertia of the Italian government and the European Union, which refuse to impose sanctions on the state of Israel and continue to maintain economic and institutional relations despite the gravity of the situation." To the contrary, workers must take the liberation of Palestine into their own hands by opposing the Euro-Atlantic imperialists. Workers must solve their essential problems (decent wages and jobs, workplace safety, housing, schools, hospitals, etc.) by taking the reins of society.

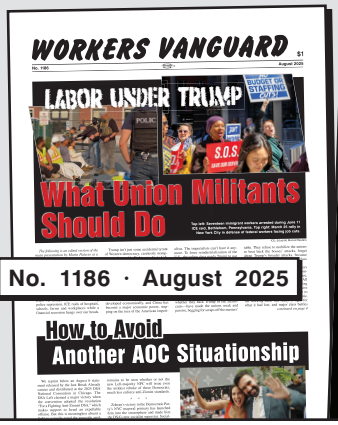
Appealing to the morality of the capitalists will not spur them to act against their own interests. Israel is an imperialist outpost, crucial for dominating and dividing the Middle East to protect the interests of the U.S. and the West in a region rich in oil and other resources, and from which they control global shipping routes. They are not going to give that up.

The liberation of Palestine will not be achieved by the pacifist bleating of Europe's liberal governments, which fear losing what little influence they have in the Middle East because of Trump. Macron and Starmer recognize the Palestinian "state" but continue to arm Israel and arrest hundreds of activists. The Spanish "socialist" government banned the shipment and transport of weapons from Spain (an insignificant amount), but not from Naval Station Rota, Europe's largest NATO base, from which access to the Mediterranean and the Middle East is controlled. Schlein, Conte and Fratoianni (co-chair of the Greens and Left Alliance) write motions of solidarity with Gaza but do not renounce their Euro-Atlantic loyalty that makes this peninsula an American aircraft carrier. They have already accepted tariffs, increased military spending and buying gas and weapons from the U.S.

The PD and the AVS (Greens and Left Alliance) embody everything that workers hate about the left: petty bourgeois politicians who feel superior and preach abstract ideals while trampling workers and the poor. They are the reason the far-right leaders Meloni and Salvini are in office! To broaden the struggle, ***we must completely break with Schlein, Conte and Fratoianni***. But this is precisely what neither the union leaders nor the radical left (from the USB to PAP [Power to the People Party]) are doing.

Even union leaders like Landini are seen by many workers as hypocrites who talk a lot but have not lifted a finger against the Jobs Act, the Fornero law (a market reform law against labor rights), the lockdowns and all the other measures that have ruined workers' lives. Unions are (or ***should*** be) mass organizations to defend the working class. ***Yes to unions! No to pro-capitalist leaders!***

The movement for Palestine is growing right now, so it is possible to unite the struggle against Zionism and imperialism with the struggles to meet the needs of all workers. We must fight in the unions and the workplace to do this and put ourselves in a position of strength vis-à-vis the government and the bosses. ***Now is the time*** to do this and prevent backsliding into the inertia and disaster the union leaders dragged us into in the name of partnership.

Defend the Sumud Flotilla!
Free Palestine!
Sink Meloni and Salvini!

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